eateries

Beezy's lives up to motto

BY WILL STEWART
News Special Writer

Beezy's Café isn't just another breakfast joint. Or lunch joint.

Bee Mayhew, the café's namesake, owner, cook and bottle washer, has transformed the former Oasis Café storefront on Washington Street in Ypsilanti into an oasis of Mayhew's own design.

Beezy's reputation preceded it by the time we arrived there recently, thanks to a load of positive press in the local blogging community. Still, we were unprepared for just how wonderful this small, intimate and charming Beezy's really is.

Using her experience working for the Zingerman's empire, Mayhew has taken Zingerman's customer-first mantra and insistence on high-quality ingredients and removed from the equation its somewhat self-consciously quirky attitude.

The result is just what the café's motto claims to offer: "Simple, honest food."

Breakfast is a specialty at Beezy's, and we were particularly impressed with the range of options that confronted us, from oatmeal to toast and jam to full-on breakfast choices, featuring eggs, bacon and home fries.

We loved the breakfast plate of scrambled eggs, Applewood bacon and home fries, which included hearty sourdough toast and the nice added touch of fresh pineapple on the side.

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Home fries were crispy and flavorful, and the scrambled eggs light and fluffy. The oatmeal was thick, hot and just right on a blustery winter morning.

Beezy's has that other staple of any good breakfast – coffee – covered, too, thanks to a delicious selection of rich, fair-trade coffee and a full espresso bar. The coffee was so good, in fact, that we overdid it on the caffeine.

But Beezy's is anything but just a breakfast place. As its chalkboard menu promises, the café offers a wide array of sandwiches served on that same hearty sourdough (or rye or cracked wheat or veggie) bread and overloaded with wonderful ingredients. We're still trying to figure out how a simple BLT sandwich surpassed any we've had before, even without adding anything to its classic recipe. Likewise, the Italian sandwich was divine, arriving as it did stacked high with ham, salami, provolone and assorted garnishes.

Beezy's always offers vegetarian options and, in the case of the avocado veggie sandwich, that option required no concession to heartiness. It's a sandwich that eats more like a meal, overflowing with sun-dried tomatoes, roasted red peppers, sprouts and red onions, in addition to its main ingredients.

Beezy's has a daily vegetarian soup option as well, although we opted for the beef vegetable, which was good, if only as a departure from what you would find in most restaurants.

That was a rare example of pedestrian performance at Beezy's, however, and we were impressed by Mayhew's commitment to using local ingredients – Calder milk, Ypsilanti Food Co-op oatmeal, chorizo from Dos Hermanos markets, etc – in her dishes.

Although the food there is excellent, Beezy's is about more than food. In her café, Mayhew has created the perfect combination of first-rate eatery with the kind of comfortable, no-nonsense atmosphere that makes you want to linger over yet another cup of coffee.

A few things still need to be addressed.

The staff, while friendly and eager to serve, appears somewhat uninformed about the menu's finer points, and we would love to see the turnaround times on made-to-order food speeded up slightly, particularly during peak hours. And it would be great to be able to order eggs other than scrambled for breakfast. But those are mere quibbles in what were otherwise splendid experiences at Ypsilanti's most-exciting – and delicious – new restaurant.

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RESTAURANT REVIEW

Beezy's Cafe

20 N. Washington St., Ypsilanti

734-485-9625; www.beezyscafe.com

"Simple, honest food" served with flair in an inviting, comfortable atmosphere.

Hours: Monday-Saturday 7 a.m. to 6 p.m.

Smoking: No.

Wheelchair access: Fair. Main dining area is open enough for easy access.

Plastic: All major cards.

Price: Cheap. All items under $7.

Value: High.

The bottom line: This hip, funky new café is suddenly the hottest thing happening on Ypsilanti's food scene. From local ingredients, owner-operator Bee Mayhew fashions wonderful breakfast creations and high-stacked sandwiches that satisfy vegetarians and carnivores alike.